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# Local Issue, National Media, And Global Implication: Media Construction of Reality About *Qanun* Of Aceh Polemic

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## Abstract

Polemic endorsement Qanun Number 3 of 2013 on Flag and the Symbol of Aceh has reached the stage of open conflict between Indonesia Government and Aceh Government. This conflict is constructed by the media using various framing devices. The consequence of media framing is the escalation of public opinion towards one-way interpretation of the media. In building a peaceful climate, the media has a very important role. The role of the media is not merely a transmitter of information and control of social reality, but the media plays a role in improving and providing citizens with a better understanding of the importance of sustainable peace for successful development

**Keywords:** Media construction, polemic, Qanun Flag and the Symbol of Aceh

## Abstrak

*Polemik pengesahan Qanun No. 3 tahun 2013 tentang Bendera dan Lambang Aceh telah mencapai tahap konflik terbuka antara Pemerintah Indonesia dan Pemerintah Aceh. Konflik ini dibangun oleh media menggunakan berbagai perangkat framing. Konsekuensi dari framing media adalah eskalasi opini publik terhadap interpretasi satu arah media. Dalam membangun iklim yang damai, media memiliki peran yang sangat penting. Peran media bukan hanya sebagai penyampai informasi dan kontrol realitas sosial, tetapi media memainkan peran dalam meningkatkan dan memberikan warga dengan pemahaman yang lebih baik tentang pentingnya perdamaian yang berkelanjutan untuk pembangunan yang sukses.*

**Kata Kunci:** Konstruksi media, polemik, Qanun Bendera dan Lambang Aceh

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## INTRODUCTION

On March 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2013, representatives from Aceh Parliament (DPRA) validate the Aceh *Qanun* Number 3 of 2013 on the Flag and Symbol of Aceh. The next two days, the Aceh Government included the Acehese *Qanun* into the regional gazette Number 49 of 2013. Background of the endorsement of that *Qanun* is the Helsinki MoU which is then reinforced by Act Number. 11 of 2006 on the Government of Aceh. For the Government of Aceh, the endorsement of that *Qanun* is a representation of the privileges and specificities of Aceh.

Aceh specificity and privileges came after two humanitarian tragedies struck Aceh. First, conflict over 30 years involving Free Aceh Movement against Republik Indonesia which ended at Helsinki negotiations, Finland (Aspinall, 2005; Kingsbury, 2005; Sujatmiko, 2012). The conflict that began in 1976 caused more than 30,000 fatalities and hundreds of thousands of people displaced (Marzuki and Warsidi, 2011). Second, the earthquake disaster of 9.1 SR and the tsunami that struck Aceh on December 26, 2004 which claimed more than 300.000 fatalities and 1.5 million lost their homes (Ghobarah et al., 2006; Klitzsch, 2014).

Despite the constitutional process through Aceh parliament and endorsed by the Governor of Aceh, the *Qanun* of the Flag and Symbol of Aceh were rejected by most of the people of Aceh, especially by the people residing in region of Central Aceh and the West-South Aceh. Peoples in that region demonstrating and declaring to separate if the substance of that *Qanun* is not amended. Minister of Home Affairs also show the rejection of that *Qanun*. This rejection resulted in a correction from the Minister of Home Affairs with the recommendation that the Aceh Government should change the substance of the flag and the symbol of Aceh.

The polemic regarding validation of *Qanun* of Flag and symbol of Aceh has threatened peace in Aceh and brings the relationship between Jakarta and the Aceh Government in a crucial condition. The mutual trust between the two sides that had been awakened fell to the lowest point. At least six times discussion has been done to synergize the perception and interpretation of the Government of the Republik Indonesia against that *Qanun*. However, result of that discussion still show no progress. There is no meeting point between Jakarta and the Government of Aceh regarding the substance of that *Qanun*.

## LITERATURE REVIEWS

As a system in the state, media not only plays a role in providing information, but also a major advocate of democracy (McNair, 2011). Media is obliged to proclaim events concerning the livelihood of the people, defend the oppressed, and advocate for the injustice and arbitrariness of the government to the people. In looking at the reality, media has a set of construction patterns that have become routines in the media (Shomaker and Rees, 1996).

Media has a role in mediating conflict (Aslam, 2010; DPI, 2012). In terms of media with conflict, controversy, and polemic has long been become academician debate. The media appearance can affect audience perception and interpretation of an issue. Most of the framing and agenda-setting process involves the process of perception and interpretation of journalists in view of an issue. When the issue is given space in the media and disseminated to the audience it will affect public opinion (Aslam, 2010).

In evaluating feasibility of the event to become a news, the media look into the values, ideology, and economy-political aspect. Controversy between the two elite political groups-center and region-- as well as the pros and cons in the society became media commodity with important news values (Lee, et al, 2008; Weldon, 2009; Cramer, 2009; Young and Soroka, 2012). In the constructionism point of view, media crews have a number of references to see which point of view will be used on an issue (van Gorp, 2007; Weaver, 2007). This point of view sometimes follows the logic of economy-politic media that all can benefited for media will be massively produced, and distribute it to the public sphere in two opposing binary positions (Mosco, 2009).

This paper will analyze the polemic of *Qanun* reporting of *Qanun* 3/2013 involving the Jakarta, the Government of Aceh and community. Framing analysis will be used to the online media, i.e. *Kompas.com* as a form of convergence of the largest national newspaper in Indonesia. In understanding policy polemics, framing analysis becomes a scalpel for dismantling media construction (Vliegthart, 2012) has similarity to ideology (Entman, 1997; Scheufele and Tewksbury, 2007; Entman, 2007), value (Weaver, 2007), and the tendency of media alignments (Shoemaker and Reese, 1996). In addition, the dismantling is useful for understanding the global impact generated by media construction on local issues in Aceh. This global impact is possible

given that online media have become a cross-border medium of space and time, resulting in the implications for the sustainability of peace in Aceh in global communities.

## METHOD

Public policy in a democratic system always contains conflict and fighting between groups and individuals in various interests (Lee et al, 2008). In view of policy conflicts, media always played an important role, constructing, and disseminating information to audiences (Pettersen, 1994). Infrequently the media are in two positions, (1) alignment to interests of the audience; and (2) subject to the owner's interests.

To disassemble media alignment through journalist construction, framing analysis becomes the methodology to be used in this research. Framing analysis is useful for disassembling journalist and media strategies in providing definitions, explanations, evaluations and recommendations in a discourse to emphasize frame work of mind on media-discourse (Entman 1993, Entman, 2007; Scheufele and Tewksbury, 2007) Especially in polemic, conflicts, and controversies (Jerit, 2007; Lee et al. 2008; Birkland and Lawrence, 2009).

To answer the purpose of this study, the object of research is the news text on the online news site *Kompas.com* –submedia Kompas Gramedia Group as the largest media in Indonesia (Sen and Hill, 2007). Since its inception, Kompas was founded by a Javanese-Chinese Journalist group affiliated with Catholic groups (Sen and Hill, 2007; Imtihan, 2014). The ownership media pattern of Kompas affects the ideology, work process of journalists, and leads to construction and media alignments (Shoemaker and Reese, 1996).

The news texts to be analyzed are the polemic text of the endorsement of *Qanun* Flag and the Symbol of Aceh. From search on the *Kompas.com* online news site using the keyword “Bendera Aceh”. Through this keyword, there are 39 news related to *Qanun* Flag and the Symbol of Aceh polemics taken for three months, that is, March-April-May 2013 with the consideration that polemic and policy conflict they are stuck and sharp at that timeline.

**Table 1. Conflict Issues *Qanun* Flag and Symbol of Aceh**

**Online News Site *Kompas.com*, 2013**

Online News Site	Month	Sum of News	Total News
<i>Kompas.com</i>	March	11	39 news
	April	27	
	May	1	

The analysis method in this research used Framing Analysis Gamson and Modigliani Model (1987). The main concept from Gamson and Modigliani framing idea in social movement. The success of the movement / social protest determined by the extent to which audiences share with the same views of an issue, common enemy, and common goals (Gamson & Modigliani, 1987; Gamson & Modigliani, 1989). Framing played an important role to turn on symbols and meaning in social movements. These symbols and meanings are used by who the opponent is and who the friend is and to form a collective solidarity by feeling that a problem is a common. The Gamson and Modigliani model frame analysis unit is a frame central or package consisting of framing devices-analyzed metaphors, catchphrases, exemplars, depiction, and visual images. The second unit of analysis is reasoning devices - analyzed through roots, appeals to principles, and consequences (Eriyanto, 2012).

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### Conflict of Flag and Symbol of Aceh

The 9.3 SR earthquake and tsunami that struck Aceh to the east coast of Africa have touching of the world community. The greatest disaster in the 21st century has prompted the Government of Indonesia and the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) to resolve the conflict that has been in Aceh for 30 years. The Government of Indonesia runs “disaster diplomacy” to pressure GAM want to negotiate that rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts can be done, quickly and safely (Tjhin, 2005; Gaillard et al. 2008; Waizenegger and Hyndman, 2010).

Disaster issues and strategies have succeeded to attracting GAM for negotiate with the Indonesian government. So Helsinki was chosen as the negotiating place and the Crisis Management Initiative (CMI) as a mediator. The appointment of CMI as a mediator can

not be separated from the background of Director of CMI, Martti Ahtisaari who is also former President of Finland. This based on several considerations: first, Finland is very close to Sweden where GAM leaders have been reside in (distance of about 45 minutes). The accesseably is expected to further maximize the negotiations. Second, the background of Martti Ahtisaari Director of Crisis Management Initiative who is also former President of Finland and including one of the influential person in the European Union. Ahtisaari's background is expected to be able to pressure the GAM side to accept any demands from the Government of Indonesia. While on the part of GAM, Ahtisaari's background has become a way of urging the internationalization of Aceh's case, at least making open the eyes of the world and monitor Aceh's case.

The Memorandum of Understanding, signed on 15 August 2005, became a new stage for Aceh's life. With the peace, the process of rehabilitation and reconstruction through Government of Indonesia policy known as open policy can be done. Open Policy is the policy to open the widest access for both local and foreign volunteers to joint for recovery process in Aceh.

However, the Aceh peace process is still very unstable. At the times conflicts can occur again. This is because there is still suspicion of the Government of Indonesia to the political elite in Aceh which is controlled by former GAM combatants. In addition, the policy products produced by the executive and legislature in Aceh are contradictory in the Government of Indonesia's policy of interpretation, resulting in the Government's refusal to accept the Aceh Government's policy products. This distinction of interpretation of the peculiarities and privileges of Aceh has become a lighter of conflict between the Government of Indonesia and the Government of Aceh, one of which is *Qanun* Number 3 of 2013 on the Flag and the Symbol of Aceh.

This rejection occurred because the substance of flag and the symbol of Aceh is the same as flag and symbol of GAM. Based on *Qanun* Aceh Number 3 of 2013 on the flag and the symbol of Aceh, stated that the Aceh flag is rectangular with the width of 2/3 (two thirds) of the length, two white straight lines at the top, two white straight lines at the bottom, a black line at the top, a black line at the bottom, and the center pictured a star moon with a base color of red, white and black (see Article 4 paragraph

1 *Qanun* Flag and the Symbol of Aceh). As for the symbol of Aceh is shaped images consisting of (1) Lion; (2) five star; (3) months; (4) shield; (5) rencong; (6) Buraq; (7) flower arrangements; (8) rice leaves; (9) the motto of *Hudep Beusare Mate Beusajan*; (10) the letter "t" in Arabic script; and (11) anchors (see Article 17, Paragraph 1).

The substance of the flag and the symbol of Aceh resembling the flag and symbol of GAM was rejected by the Government of Indonesia. There are at least thirteen points which become clarification materials of the Government of Indonesia against the substance of *Qanun* Flag and the Symbol of Aceh. The background of clarification is for the flag and the symbol of Aceh to be adjusted with Government Regulation Number 77 of 2007 on the Regional Symbol. This clarification was not addressed by the Aceh Government, causing tensions between the Central Government and the Government of Aceh to date. Even this tension has involved the EU and CMI that are still monitoring the progress of peace in Aceh.

### News Topics in Online News Sites *Kompas.com*

The first analysis was conducted by looking at topics around the polemic of the endorsement of *Qanun* Flag and the Symbol of Aceh on the online news site *Kompas.com*. Based on the analysis of the news text, the researchers found there are 7 (seven) main topics developed by journalists, namely, (1) Ratification of *Qanun* Flag and the Symbol of Aceh; (2) Supporting Action of *Qanun* Flag and Symbol of Aceh; (3) Action Rejecting *Qanun* Flag and Symbol of Aceh; (4) Attitudes of the Central Government; (5) Attitudes of the Government of Aceh; (6) Insistence on Clarification of *Qanun* of Flag and Symbol of Aceh; and (7) Dialogue and Bargaining.

Related news topics, online news site *Kompas.com* paid full attention to the essay of various elements of society and elite to QBL Aceh clarified and revised. For this topic *Kompas.com* gives space 11 news (28.2%) of 39 polemic news. The next topic is the attitude of the central government against the approval of QBL Aceh, ie, *Kompas.com* 10 news (25.6%) while for the topic of Action refused QBL Aceh *Kompas.com* gives space for 6 news (15.4%) from 39 polemic news.

The selection of these topics is one of the keys



**Table 2. Topics *Qanun* Polemic Flag and the Symbol of Aceh in News Online Site *Kompas.com***

Topic	Frequently	%
QBL Clarification Insistence	11	28.2
Attitudes of the Central Government	10	25.6
Reject Action QBL	6	15.4
Attitudes of the Government of Aceh	5	12.8
Endorsement of QBL Aceh	3	7.7
Supporting Action QBL	2	5.1
Dialogue and Bargaining	2	5.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>100</b>

to seeing the appearance of polemics, controversy, and conflict in the media. The media and journalist's perspective on an issue is influenced by various media routines, editorial pressures, and media ideology that sometimes side with the dominant ideology. Therefore, in this perspective put news production as a process of fighting various groups in the newsroom.

The fought aspects may concern ideology and economic interests, so that the news of the results is seen as symbols reflecting the dominance of the political ideology and economic interests of the group winning the battle. For, only those who become the dominant group alone who ultimately more freely to construct the desired reality according to their interests. Technically, it can be done by manipulating reality itself or conditioned others to have a certain impression on the reality it displays.

The position of the media that selects the topic according to the interpretation of the journalist and the alignment to the dominant ideology taps the media and political debate towards objectivity and subjectivity in the media. For many, the media are required to be objective. The standard used is that the media must be able to see from a balanced and factual position. Following the opinion of Kovach & Rosentiel (2001) that an objective journalist is a journalist who puts his conscience in covering and writing news. Objectivity is always associated with the impartiality of media and journalists on the one hand. Therefore cover both sides become keywords that must be held firm by the media and workers in it. On the other hand, a critical-constructivism view sees no standard of objectivity in the media. All media content is influenced by the subjectivity of the

journalist. Adagium appears that the objectivity of the media is the subjectivity itself.

One strategy in looking at media construction of an issue is to see who is the reference or source of media referrals in the news. Selection of media sources is a routine media that is always done in the editorial space. The process involves networking owned by the media (Arifin, 2010). Usually the media already has a set of experts or observers who can be contacted at any time. They will talk about things that the media wants (McNair, 2011). Not infrequently the speakers can be opinion leaders that influence public interpretation of an issue. On the other hand, the observers presented by the media only become "media tongues" so that the image emerges that the source is the one who rejects an issue, not the media (Berkowitz, 1997).

Related to the polemic of *Qanun* Flag and the Symbol of Aceh, the online news site *Kompas.com* puts its journalist as the main "source" of the news. The consequence of this, is the strong interpretation of journalists derived from the definition of reality at the editorial table. Reports of journalists' eyes are the source of referrals from *Kompas.com* online news sites so that issues can be directed in accordance with the wishes of journalists and the media.

In addition, the online news site *Kompas.com* quotes many queries of the Central Government. Yet in the polemic endorsement of *Qanun Bendera* and *Lambang Aceh* this Central Government is in a position of opposition with the Government of Aceh. Consequently, the consequences of selecting speakers from the Central Government are media rejection of *Qanun* Flag and the Symbol of Aceh. This condition can effect on publishing public opinion in accordance with the agenda-setting media. It can contain news

bias because the journalist's interpretation of events can be polluted by his subjectivity (Entman, 2007). Ultimately, when subjectivity appears in the news, it is an attempt to lead public opinion to the eagerness of the media even though it sometimes has to clash with its original reality.

### **Polemic of Public Policy In Media Construction**

Through media and polemical construction talks as part of the dynamics of local politics in the era of decentralization, the use of framing analysis into blades considered to be sharp enough to dissect media texts. Working patterns of journalists are not only interpreted as an ordinary routine, but rather a complex process and require professional work - commonly referred to as the editorial process. In determining whether an event has a news value is actually an early stage of the editorial work process. Usually an editor determines what should be covered, while a reporter determines how to cover it, as he deals with the search / assembly and cultivation of news. After all the material has been collected, writing and editing are done. In the final stages, while editing, there is also enrichment of news. This process is known as the construction of media reality.

The process of editorial work takes place in the polemic of the ratification of *Qanun* Number 03 of 2013 on the Flag and the Symbol of Aceh. This polemic began to surface in the public sphere after it was discovered that the substance of flag and symbol of Aceh resembles flag and symbol of GAM. The online site *antaranews.com* began responding by raising post-ratification news in various headlines and news emphases.

This study shows that the polemics of the *Qanun* Flag and the symbol of Aceh received great attention from *Kompas.com*, this can be seen from the amount of news posted by the two online news sites. The number of news occurrences indicates that the issue is important because it contains a polemic where there is a conflict of interpretation between the Central Government and the Aceh Government as well as between communities. In addition to conflict, conflicting polemics of *Qanun* Flag and Symbol of Aceh also have impacts that are feared to undermine the sovereignty of the Republic of Indonesia and undermine peace in Aceh. This is based on the varied reaction of the community and the political elite in responding to the endorsement of *Qanun* flag and symbol of Aceh. The magnitude of the impact and polemic caused by the endorsement of QBL Aceh is the news value (news value) which

becomes the consideration of an issue or incident or not to be lifted by the media (Weldon, 2009). The value of this news is related to the ideology of media professionals.

Referring to the value of the news, media organizations and journalists do news construction by selecting issues and highlighting the facts (Entman, 2007). Journalists and media companies have the ability to dictate what events are worthy of the news, where they are placed, and how much space is allocated to the news (Cissel, 2012). The polemic discourse presented by the media is part of the construction of the meaning of events by journalists who direct public opinion to agree to accept and support a larger discourse, public discourse (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989). Thus, media is often biased in constructing discourse because Influenced by the political and economic interests in which the media live (Entman, 2007).

Through the polemical endorsement of *Qanun* Flag and Symbol of Aceh, *Kompas.com* highlighted the topic of "Clarification of *Qanun* Flag and Symbol of Aceh". The selection of this topic is an attempt by both online news sites to frame this polemical issue towards a shared consensus. This topic is a marker that the two online news sites are on the side of the contra endorsement of QBL Aceh, in this case the Central Government and some people of Aceh in Central Aceh and South West Aceh.

The results of online news site framing analysis show that *Kompas.com* framing the endorsement of *Qanun* Flag and Symbol of Aceh as an act that violates the constitution, namely Government Regulation number 77 of 2007. Frame package used by *Kompas.com* construct the reality that the flag of Aceh is similar to GAM flag and should be revised. This frame package gives a definition, description, problem, and evaluation of events and final results in a number of logical conclusions (van Gorp, 2007). Framing is a very important level that combines words into a sentence, phrase, or story to convey to audiences (Cissel, 2012).

Through the polemic endorsement of *Qanun* Flag and Symbol of Aceh, *Kompas.com* shows the attitude of alignment to the camp against the flag of Aceh. This can be seen from Reasoning Devices. *Kompas.com* uses roots that *Qanun* Flag and Symbol of Aceh are contradictory to PP Number 77 of 2007 on the Regional Symbol and Helsinki MoU. As for Appeals to principles proposed by the two online news sites also leads to the attitude of reminding the Government of Aceh to focus more on the development of the

**Tabel 3. Online News Site *Kompas.com* Construction of Polemic**

Element	Media Construction
<i>Frame Package</i>	The flag of Aceh resembles the flag of GAM and should be revised
<i>Metaphors</i>	The flag of Aceh manifests the culture and struggle of the people of Aceh as well as a symbol of peace and unity
<i>Catchphrases</i>	<i>Qanun</i> Flag and Symbol of Aceh violate the rules of law for adopting separatist symbols
<i>Exemplars</i>	The flag of Aceh resembles the Gam Flag as a separatist group
<i>Depictions</i>	Separatist movement and forbidden group
<i>Visual Images</i>	Mass action, flag raising Star Month
<i>Roots</i>	QBL Aceh is contradictory to PP. 77 of 2007 and the Helsinki MoU
<i>Appeals to Principles</i>	The Aceh government should focus on building the welfare of the people of Aceh post-MoU Helsinki
<i>Consequences</i>	The central government must act decisively Against QBL Aceh; Resolve the polemic QBL Aceh within the framework of the State Unity of the Republic of Indonesia

Acehnese people's welfare. Media alignments highlight more and encourage the *Qanun* Flag and Symbol of Aceh that reap the polemic to be resolved by dialogue. The main thing that must be upheld is the sense of humanity and unity of all the people of Aceh.

The implication of *Kompas.com* construction is the formation of public opinion that Aceh dare to oppose the Government of Indonesia. In addition, there is a perception that GAM's struggle is changing through the political struggle to liberate Aceh from Indonesia. The most crucial consequence is the emergence of a potential new conflict between the Government of Indonesia and the Government of Aceh thereby threatening the peace agenda that has been achieved since 2005 through the Helsinki MoU.

One of the factors affecting news framing is news routine. More news selection processes occur in a routine editorial work, a form of organizational routine. Every day media institutions regularly produce news, and the selection process is part of the daily work rhythm and regularity (Stuart Hall, *et al.*, in Eriyanto, 2012). Based on news text analysis from both online news sites it can be speculated that The Aceh Party - as the ruling party - feels no need to compromise because its officials believe Jakarta will be subject to their wishes as during the 2012 regional elections.

Partai Aceh wants to harness the enormous emotional power of the Aceh Flag to mobilize voters for the 2014 elections (ICG, 2013). Acehnese and Acehnese Legislative Executives who are controlled by the Aceh Party elite are sure to win in the face of an opinion war with Jakarta. If the Central Government in Jakarta rejects the Aceh Flag, the Aceh Party can become popular with its supporters for demonstrating itself as an opponent of the Central Government. Conversely, if the Central Government receives the Aceh Flag, the Aceh Party becomes convinced that their tough stance to defend the design of the Flag and the Symbol of Aceh will bring results and the likelihood that its superiors will demand to gain more authority.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the explanation in the previous section of the discussion, it can be clearly said that the framing of the *Kompas.com* interprets the substance of the flags and symbols of Aceh contained in the *Qanun* Flag and the Symbol of Aceh is unacceptable for adopting the flag and symbol of GAM. The substance of *Qanun* Flag and the Symbol of Aceh can also direct the public, especially the people of Aceh into the trauma of the past. Media interpretation is constructed by involving discourse and language

to direct the attitude of rejecting the endorsement of *Qanun* Flag and symbol of Aceh and to seek dialogue between the Central Government and the Government of Aceh to reach the consensus.

The polemical endorsement of the *Qanun* Flag and the symbol of Aceh has become important for the media because of the value of the news it contains. This event is constructed by the media through the selection of issues and protrusions of facts, so that in the end what is presented to the public is a constructed reality. The mass media plays an important role in the progress of peace in Aceh. The functions of mass media must be actualized to support the sustainability of Aceh peace. Mass media control functions should be done in a balanced and impartial manner.

This research shows that construction and media alignments will have an impact on the length of polemics between the Central Government and the Government of Aceh. Not only that, the misconception of reality by the mass media has had an impact on the increasing tension between the pro and opposition camps. The key is on the media. Peace building in Aceh will not succeed without full media support.

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